



A Sermon

preached in

St. Andrew's Church

on the occasion of

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee

by

Rev. W. T. Herridge, B.D.

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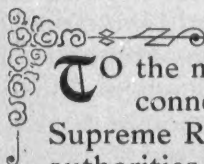
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A Sermon

— BY —

Rev. W. T. Herridge, B.D.

"Fear God : honour the king."—1 Pet. 2 : 17.

 **T**O the mind of the Apostle there is an intimate connection between men's attitude towards the Supreme Ruler of the universe, and the constituted authorities of earthly government. Throughout this chapter, he first emphasizes the necessity of belief in God, and then infers the obligation to believe in and obey the powers ordained of God in all the varied relationships of life. If we have watched with any care the course of history, and tried to discover the main motives of revolt against rule and justice, we shall find no reason, I think, to reject the position of the Jewish Apostle, or to separate true Theism, with all that is involved in it, from the steadfast maintenance of the legitimate functions of the State.

There have been times, not of blind insurrection, but of righteous protest against tyranny and greed, when good men, valuing their liberty of conscience and their inheritance of truth, have drawn the sword, aye, even against a king, who dared to ignore the sacred and inalienable rights belonging equally to all men. Reformation has been unhappily forced, now and then,

to take the form of revolution. But a wide distinction must be drawn between disturbances of this kind, needful for the nation's welfare, and the idle uprising of unprincipled men ready to oppose government simply because it was government, and to reduce everything, not as they would tell us to uniform contentment and peace, but—when their work was done—to the common level of indistinguishable ruin. It is not too much to say that the destroying forces of the world have been born for the most part in the gloomy realms of practical atheism, and there nurtured into those hideous and malignant forms which go forth on their mission of death. If we throw away our belief in God as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the framer of the constitution of the universe, there seems no reason in the nature of things why we should continue to believe in or to obey any earthly rulership which has any point of resemblance to the Divine plan or any agreement with Divine principles. The chain of law must be complete in its highest links, and then—save when justice is utterly subverted—it will be easy and natural to follow the Apostolic injunction: "Fear God, Honour the King."

Happily, as British subjects, we know so little of the ruinous results of despotism, that we may be in danger of esteeming too lightly the blessings of constitutional government, and accepting them almost as a matter of course. The structure of our laws leaves us in little peril either from the tyrant or from the mob; but we must not forget that these laws are the outcome of centuries of experience, and sometimes of conflict,

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broadening from precedent to precedent until they comprehend the manifold privileges in which we rejoice to-day. It has been said that the British constitution is democratic under the mask of a monarchy. ; and the statement is substantially true. Without losing, on the one hand, the prestige and glory of the past, or, on the other hand, yielding to the communistic sophistry that all men are equal, the structure of government under which we live is admirably fitted to conserve the interests and advance the welfare of the whole body politic. And, while we ought to give full credit to the illustrious counsellors whose names have graced the annals of our Queen, no one can fail to see how much the Queen herself has done by her noble influence, not less than her fine statesmanship, to bring about the consummation in which we rejoice to-day. If a rule so dignified and yet so loving, so unselfish and yet so firm, be indeed the mask of democracy, may it long continue its beneficence in the annals of Britain,

“And make
The bounds of freedom wider yet.
By shaping some august decree,
Which keeps her throne unshaken still,
Broad-based upon her people's will,
And compass'd by the inviolate sea.”

There is no need for me to sketch, at any great length, the life of our Queen ; for it is more or less familiar to us all. She has always identified herself so closely with the interests of the people, and her lofty personal character has so impressed itself on the age,

that we cannot easily overestimate the impulse she has given to progressive movements which now command the admiration of the world. It may be said, and quite truly, that certain advances of the past sixty years would have been made whatever Sovereign had occupied the throne. But who will venture to say that, if the head of the nation had not shown an example to her people of love and truth and righteousness, we should have been able to rejoice as fully as we can to-day in the growth of those Christianizing influences which, without ignoring the marvellous strides made in other directions, must always be viewed as the crowning achievement of the Victorian era?

In her early life, the future ruler enjoyed the advantage of a wise and prudent training, which not only developed those powers of good judgment and self-reliance which she has since exercised so conspicuously, but brought to perfection those home instincts which, whether she be queen or peasant, are the chief grace of womanhood. When she was made aware, on the death of her uncle, William IV, of the new trust imposed upon her as sovereign of the Empire, she indulged in no vain or empty dream, but feeling her solemn responsibilities, sought to discharge them, from the outset, in the fear of God and for the best interests of the people who hailed her as their Queen. Her wedded life was ideal. Rejecting some of the fatal precedents of the past—the *mariages de convenance*, which had been the fruitful source of so much royal intrigue and misery—she, like a true woman, married the man she loved.

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Though blessed with wise and experienced counsellors, her exalted place had hitherto compelled a certain measure of isolation. Now she found a close and true companionship, and without being less a Queen could share unreservedly with another the joys and griefs of her inmost soul. Seldom has history seen a more noble and unselfish character than that of the Prince Consort, Albert the Good. So unobtrusively did he mature his plans, that the people, at first somewhat prejudiced against him, were not conscious of his great worth till he was gone. He entered with the Queen into all the concerns of state, and into all measures for the general welfare, and when he passed away, the crown became indeed "a lonely splendour." Yet the widowed sovereign, in spite of the keenness of her personal grief, so far from forgetting the needs of her subjects, strove to comfort others by the comfort wherewith she herself had been comforted of God, and her natural self-reliance and sound judgment were called into still more conspicuous exercise. Alike in years of peace, and amid the tumults of war, she has kept a steady hand upon the helm of state, always prompt in defence of national honour, and sincere in sympathy for her people's sorrows and cares, leading the vanguard of an enlightened civilization, and seeking to diffuse throughout the length and breadth of her realm the love of truth and the practice of righteousness. As we look back over these sixty years of her long and glorious history, and think of the virtues not of the ruler alone, but of the woman, the wife, the mother, as we mark the patient heroism of her

widowhood; as we see her now, bowed somewhat, it may be, with the weight of years and the grief which time has brought her, yet still as solicitous as ever for the welfare of her subjects and the renown of the empire which she sways, the memories of the past unite with the jubilations of the present to fill us with loyal gratitude, and make us sing with heart and voice: "God save the Queen!"

And when we turn from this brief survey of her own rare and beautiful life to the progress of the nation during the last sixty years, we have manifold reasons for keeping this time of Jubilee. Her vast empire now embraces about one-fifth of the habitable globe, and, though divided not only by distance but by paramount local interests, the spirit of loyalty is diffused throughout her wide dominions. She has lived to see the marvellous growth of the great island continent, Australia, which has increased more than twenty-fold in population and material resources since she began to reign. She has lived to see what was once called "the dark continent" penetrated by the light of civilization, and offering promise, in spite of obvious difficulties, of a future unity which will contribute to the welfare of Africa, and, at the same time, bring its reinforcement of strength to the Empire at home. She has lived to see the Indian mutinies suppressed by British valour, and the ties of kindredship strengthened among millions in that land by the ready response, from every quarter, to the cry of a famine-stricken people. She has lived to see the gradual development of her Canadian colonies

in commerce and wealth and knowledge, and the happy federation of widely-separated provinces into one great Dominion.

The reign of Queen Victoria marks an era of progress unparalleled, one might almost say, in the history of the world. Within the sixty years which it embraces, there have sprung up many of the agencies which now minister to the convenience and comfort of mankind. The railway, the steamship, the various electrical appliances have won their splendid triumphs. Knowledge of all kinds has become more widely diffused, and more accurate in its investigations. In spite of the alleged utilitarianism of the age, the galaxy of poets about her throne rivals that of the great Elizabeth, while every department of literature contains some worthy name.

Nor for these things alone will the Victorian era live on the page of history. The chief glory of these sixty years is essentially Christian in its character. They have witnessed a vigorous and partly successful attempt to improve the condition of the poor, to suppress hideous forms of vice whether in the hovel or the mansion, to bring the good news of a Divine Redeemer to the heathen abroad and the heathen at our doors, to live as though we really believed in a common Father and in a common brotherhood of human souls.

It would be, indeed, too much to say that we have yet reached the ideal of a Christian nation, fearing God and working righteousness in all the departments of national and individual life. The greater our gifts, the

greater our responsibility. While we rejoice in our manifold blessings, we must seek to understand our perils too. There is a danger, in our day, lest in the multitude of labour-saving appliances, the old habits of steadfast industry should be abandoned, and a growing idleness sow the seeds of discontent and ruin. We need not fear the frown of the despot; but we may well pray to be delivered from the hoarse clamor of the mob. It is still a most serious question, how we shall hush the *misereres* which obtrude their sad tones into our song of Jubilee; how we shall exchange the false Socialism which asserts itself in many quarters for the true Socialism of Jesus Christ; how we shall secure integrity in public affairs, and overthrow the schemes of selfishness; how we shall best diffuse Christian knowledge and Christian liberty over the whole world. These are some of the problems which confront us to-day, and there is no reason why we should fear to face them. If we fulfil our obligations, and put to the best use the privileges which God has given us, then the future, though it may involve conflict, promises likewise the rewards of victory.

"Follow you the star that lights a desert pathway, yours or mine,
Forward, till you learn the highest human nature is divine.

Follow Light and do the Right—for man can half control his doom—
Till you see the deathless Angel seated on the vacant Tomb."

It may be safely said that nowhere throughout the British Empire is there greater reason to observe with thanksgiving Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee than among the people of this Dominion. When the reign

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of the Queen began, a large part of our land was nothing but an unexplored and seemingly inhospitable wilderness. Almost incessant strife had long prevailed not only with the aboriginal tribes but between the two European races which joined in its colonization. The Indian problem is now practically settled, and the ancient feud of French and English exchanged for the unity of a common patriotism which rejoices to be called Canadian. There have been times when the ebbing wave of colonial life has seemed to leave a stretch of barren sand along the shore of history, but each flood-tide has risen higher than the last, until now the purely experimental stage of our career is passing away forever. Step by step a path has been cut through the forest, and the earth made to yield its varied stores. Step by step we have grown in wealth and knowledge and the amenities of a free civilization. Step by step we have come to discern more clearly the character of the mission which is entrusted to our care. We have had our times of commercial depression, of divided interests, of strife within our borders and invasion from without them. But these varied experiences, so far from bringing disheartenment, have only served to emphasize the value of self-control and resolution and fidelity in order to the building up of a strong and stable commonwealth. In a happy day the federation of the provinces was accomplished, and their separate history merged though not obscured in the history of the whole Dominion. We have reason to be proud of the place assigned to Canada's representative in the official cele-

bration of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee, and of the instructive object-lesson afforded by the presence of a French-Canadian Premier so well qualified to express and illustrate in his own person the union of race and creed amongst us in a common loyalty to the throne and Empire of Britain. It is doubtful if we have ever felt more strongly than we do to-day the advantage of cultivating that spirit of federation which seeks to join together British subjects everywhere in a general effort not simply to advance their own commercial or political interests, but to take the place which Providence has assigned them in those movements of civilization and Christianity which have no other bounds than the needs of the whole wide world. Whatever may be the future development of Canadian history we must always cherish with reverent love the glorious traditions of the past, and remember that we owe to the Mother Land the Magna Charta of civil and religious freedom, the sacredness of private life, the impulse towards many forms of progress, the instructive lessons of changeful centuries, and the brilliant hopes which animate our future if we are true to conscience and to God.

Let us, then, keep this year of Jubilee as becomes a Christian people. Let us honour our beloved Queen by showing regard to those principles of righteousness which, amid the fierce light that beats upon a throne, she has sought so steadfastly to maintain. Let this year witness amongst us a distinct advance in honest industry, a firmer adherence to divine law in all the duties of life, a more patient effort to attain a broad and

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wholesome culture, a further emancipation of our souls from the tyranny of evil, a more harmonious exercise of those offices of love and compassion which are the crowning glory of mankind. Then, as we watch the ship of State with that dear queenly hand at the helm, looking back over its glittering pathway and forward towards its unseen haven of rest, we may well cry:

“Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea;
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee;
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith, triumphant o’er our fears.
Are all with thee—are all with thee !”

